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widespread phone snooping in U.S.

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Snooping by spies — domestic and foreign — on U.S. telephone calls continues to be an area of major concern in Washington.

Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, says interception of private and government phone calls goes well beyond previously reported activities of Soviet personnel.

"Gangsters, industrial spies, spies from big and small nations can stick up an antenna and intercept," Admiral Turner told reporters. "It's a much bigger problem than just the Soviet Embassy."

Government officials, Admiral Turner said, are in the midst of a "very substantial effort" to find answers to these invasions of privacy, but the solutions are "difficult and expensive."

Soviet efforts to monitor phone calls within the United States first surfaced publicly in June, 1975. Press reports indicated the Soviets had obtained the ability to intercept microwave transmissions, which at that time were used for 70 percent of all long-distance calls. Using advanced computers, the Soviets could separate the conversations and identify the callers.

Admiral Turner says protective steps have been taken to foil such efforts aimed at sensitive U.S. Government transmissions. But the problems involved in protecting corporate and other private communications, including sensitive industrial data, are difficult.

In his first detailed meeting with the press here since the recent reorganization of America's intelligence branch, Admiral Turner revealed that the CIA will undergo a staff cut of 800 persons within the next two years. Most of the reduction will be achieved through attrition.

Leaking of material

The CIA chief also discussed the leaking of sensitive material, counterintelligence cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the reorganization.

Five months ago, Mr. Turner expressed serious concern with the unauthorized release of classified information by government employees. At that time he spoke of the possible need for criminal penalties to halt the leaks.

That concern, he says, has mounted since he took office. In one effort to curb losses of sensitive information, the CIA has recently conducted surprise inspections of security practices among corporations who do work for the agency. Poor practices were uncovered in a number of cases.

Some leaks, such as disclosure in a Washington paper that King Hussein of Jordan had received secret payments totaling millions of dollars since 1957, have caused "very considerable damage" to U.S. intelligence efforts around the world, he said. Some persons working secretly for the CIA, for example, have become fearful of disclosure and have either broken off contact, or reduced the flow of information.

Admiral Turner noted that the recent reorganization of U.S. intelligence agencies is not complete. One other avenue being explored by a task force is to establish a new committee that would coordinate the counterintelligence activities of the CIA and the FBI.

The FBI has jurisdiction over counterintelligence within U.S. borders, while the CIA has responsibility outside the United States. Cooperation is reasonably good today, after sinking to a nadir during the latter days of former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. But better methods still are needed for "handing off" cases from one agency to another, Admiral Turner said.

The CIA chief was high in praise of President Carter's recently approved reorganization of the intelligence services. Mr. Carter gave the CIA director full budget authority over all intelligence operations, including those in the Defense Department. He also has authority to direct operations across the board.

But the new setup will retain the division of authority for analysis. Thus, Defense will remain the top authority in military intelligence, with a secondary role in political matters.

The State Department will be tops in political affairs, with a secondary role in economics, and the CIA will remain tops in economics, with strength in politics and military matters as well.

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